Socratic Seminar Fishbowl Student-Centered Poem Analysis

for Close Reading, inference, central idea, metaphor

Mother to Son

By Langston Hughes

Well, son, I'll tell you:  
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.  
It's had tacks in it,  
And splinters,  
And boards torn up,  
And places with no carpet on the floor --  
Bare.  
But all the time  
I'se been a-climbin' on,  
And reachin' landin's,  
And turnin' corners,  
And sometimes goin' in the dark  
Where there ain't been no light.  
So boy, don't you turn back.  
Don't you set down on the steps  
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.  
Don't you fall now --  
For I'se still goin', honey,  
I'se still climbin',  
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

Inner Circle:

1. Read this poem to yourself

One person reads this aloud

1. Who is the speaker in this poem?
2. What is the Central Idea?
3. What are the pieces of Supporting Evidence for this central idea?
4. Where does the tone change?
5. What do these words refer to: “tacks,” “splinters,” “corners,” “dark,” “light”
6. What is the extended metaphor?

Outer Circle: Note relevant observations on the poem, when is discussion leadership seen, what is a good question asked, what is a good interpretation, what is good close reading

Post- Discussion Writing on the poem analysis: Describe the extended metaphor in this poem. What two metaphors are contrasted? State the central idea of this poem, using relevant and specific details from the poem.